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This paper proposes eight direct and three indirect ways for college and university departments to share the responsibility for better social studies instruction through improved teacher education, principally by teaching the student how to relate the content gained in social studies courses to the teaching methods presented in education courses. In each case, the setting is considered, the problem in teacher preparation described, a solution proposed, and advantages and disadvantages of the proposed solution listed. (SG)

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CONTRIBUTIONS COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENTS CAN MAKE TO MORE EFFECTIVE TEACHER EDUCATION IN SOCIAL STUDIES FOR THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Preface

Many students aspiring to become elementary school teachers find themselves taking courses in the social sciences concurrently with their social studies methods courses. It is easy to imagine such a student enrolled in a geography course and a methods class, studying in the library one afternoon. It is just possible that he reads the two passages which follow as he prepares for his geography class and his methods class:

> The cultivation of rice is one of the distinguishing traits of several Oriental cultures. The first cultivation of rice was probably carried out on hilly land outside of the river floodplains in Burma and Thailand. In those countries today there are hundreds of varieties of rice, each especially suited to particular combinations of slope, soil, and drainage. Later the technique of controlling the water of river valleys and growing paddy rice on the floodplains was perfected. The different cultures of South Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia are all built around the cultivation of rice; for not only does this crop furnish a very large part of the food supply, but the labor of producing it takes up a large part of the working hours of the Oriental peoples, and customs associated with rice are found in the religious ceremonies and in the idiomatic phrases of the language.[1]

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[1]Preston E. James, A Geography of Man, 3rd ed. (Waltham, Mass.: Blaisdell Pub. Co., 1966), p. 111.

> The scope of recently developed programs has been more frequently defined in terms of subjects, themes, generalizations, and social functions (basic human activities) than in terms of needs, problems, and life situations. This trend is in line with the current emphasis on using the social sciences as the major source of social studies content. Attention may also be given to crucial problems, needs, and significant life situations but this is usually done within the over-all framework of the social studies.[2]

Although these passages and the chapters of which they are a part can be read close together in time, the student may think of them as quite separate from each other, as being unrelated. He is more apt to think in terms of (1) acquiring specific information about Oriental rice cultures and (2) learning about organizing instruction in the social studies. No thought may be given to considering curricular possibilities, using both the content and method discussed in his readings. Likewise, his instructors may not encourage him or give him time to consider such possibilities.

Here is an example of a dichotomy that commonly exists between social science courses and methods classes required of students in a teacher education program. Many concepts and generalizations a student may read in his social science course work are also a part of present elementary school social studies programs. Yet there is usually no allowance for helping students plan ideas as to how they might develop the concepts and generalizations in an elementary classroom.

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[2]John U. Michaelis, Social Studies for Children in a Democracy, 3rd ed., (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), p. 150.

Efforts to resolve this situation and hence pave the way for improved social studies instruction can not be left entirely within the realm of a methods class in the social studies. Social science departments can make contributions toward more effective teacher education in the elementary school social studies.

In the following pages an attempt is made to show how college and university departments might share the responsibility of better social studies instruction through improved teacher education. Using a specific format, the first part of this paper deals with direct contributions the departments can make. The second part relates some more indirect contributions.

Direct

1. The Setting. Undergraduate students at institutions of higher learning are commonly required to take a number of courses from the separate disciplines making up the social sciences--often in a prescribed sequence called general education. Other undergraduate students major in one or another of the social sciences.

   The Problem in Teacher Preparation. Elementary teacher education departments are faced with the arrival of many students from the setting described above, declaring a desire to teach in the elementary school.

   a. Their "social science" courses often, if not usually, have been taught with little or no attention to pointing up the organizing concepts of the discipline(s), without focus on the methods of the scholars who work in the disciplines, and without the disclosure to the college students of the heuristic questions which are second nature to good scholars as they attack potential sources of new information and knowledge.

   b. These students often have neither worked with students of elementary age, nor visited an elementary classroom since their own experience in elementary schools.

   A Proposed Solution. Revamp the social sciences courses to include the organizing concepts, the methodology of the disciplines, and the analytical questions used by scholars. In addition, provide prospective teachers with the opportunities for (elective) individual study, for credit, available parallel to and concurrent with the courses taken in the social science disciplines.

   a. The individual study should be conducted by a team made up of the professor teaching the social science course in question and a specialist in elementary methods.

   b. The individual study should provide the prospective teacher with the opportunity to translate the content of the social science course into learning experiences appropriate to elementary school pupils. The prospective teacher should be able to try these out in an elementary classroom, as a part of the study.

   c. The team should supervise this elementary school experience, helping the prospective teacher to analyze the suitability of the content and methods and the effectiveness of the instruction.

Advantages

a. The social science learnings will be heightened.
b. Prospective teachers will profit from early, brief, first-hand experiences in teaching elementary pupils.
c. The accumulation of many such experiences over the college years will afford better assimilation of the content and processes than current programs permit.

d. Students who come to doubt either their interest in teaching or their aptitude for the role can make other occupational choices without the severe penalties incurred under the present system.

Disadvantages

a. The program requires that team members work together compatibly. Not all faculty members will meet this criterion, and not all will wish to teach in this way.
b. Proliferation of elective units in individual study may result.
c. A large program would "use up" many elementary classes: hence, coordination with some school districts may be difficult.
d. The allocation of faculty time to individual study units may create staffing shortages.

2. The Setting. Large numbers of teachers return to institutions of higher learning each year for coursework which will lead to salary increments. Traditionally they enroll in education courses, although many of them have no advanced degree goal.

The Problem in Teacher Preparation. The nature of the elementary school social studies program requires teachers with an inter-disciplinary background in the social sciences. Teachers need to take an inter-disciplinary approach to the teaching of social studies. Many of them recognize this need and would prefer to build the necessary background, were there the opportunity. The traditional courses, discipline by discipline, do not permit this.

Proposed Solutions. The practical nature of workshops has always appealed to elementary school teachers.

a. Provide for experienced teachers a 3-4 unit workshop-type course which will focus on an area-study taught by a team whose members represent different social science disciplines. For example, the first year might focus on Latin America, the second year on Africa, the third year on the Far East, etc.

(1) Build the teams to include both interdisciplinary-social science faculty and social studies methods people.
(2) Provide for the methods person to help with the translation of the social science content into elementary curriculum experiences appropriate to specified grade levels.
(3) Arrange for the full team to participate, with the roles shifting. The social science people will provide depth experiences in content, while the methods person plans ways to use the content. Then the methods person will provide direction for the curriculum experiences, while the social science people serve as resource people and consultants.

Advantages

a. The arrangement provides an intellectually stimulating experience with content in depth.
b. The interdisciplinary approach will serve as a model for melding the disciplines.
c. Teachers are given an opportunity to work with organizing principles and data-gathering approaches employed by social scientists.
d. The practical nature of the experience will encourage teachers to put their learning to immediate use.

Disadvantages

a. A team approach will require provision for extensive preparation time as a part of the faculty load.
b. Problems of compatibility in a situation of rotating leadership will discourage participation by some faculty members.
c. The demands on "education" faculty may exceed the supply unless some traditional offerings are curtailed.

b. Provide for experienced teachers a two-semester extension course with an emphasis on social science content, social studies methods, and learning theory. Such a course can deal with content across the grade levels or, if needs indicate, at a single grade level. Assign an instructional team of two or three people who will plan together, allocate responsibilities, and undertake instruction.

Advantages

a. Content background, methods and learning theory are presented as an organic whole.
b. The continuity over two semesters affords time for students to try out their ideas, change their ways of doing things, and secure feedback.
c. The extended time will allow instructors to provide models, give guidance and support, and evaluate the applications to specific situations.

Disadvantages

a. Not all faculty have the competencies and flexibility to work under such arrangements.
b. Districts served will often be required to bear the additional costs.
c. The planning time required increases geometrically with the number of instructors.

3. The Setting. Large numbers of undergraduate students who aspire to teach in the elementary schools take majors in elementary education and/or a major or minor(s) in single social science disciplines such as history.

The Problem in Teacher Preparation. The elementary school social studies program anticipated in the 1970's indicates strongly the need for teachers

who have a facility for working across the social science disciplines as they explore specific content areas with their students. They need to integrate the contributions of anthropology, sociology, geography, economics, political science, and history in the study of any people. This need includes a preparation which has provided them with the organizing principles and concepts, some of the methods and skills used by competent scholars, and the analytical questions employed by scholars in their search for reliable knowledge.

Proposed Solutions. Disestablish the notion that every student must concentrate in depth on a single discipline.

a. Provide truly interdisciplinary majors and minors in the social sciences. These should not be conceived of as courses exclusively for the preparation of teachers. They should be open to all students who desire a broad experience which will both prepare them and allow them to continue their social science education through individual study.

b. Reorganize lower division social science courses required of all students (often called general education courses) in such a way as to make them interdisciplinary in their focus, sequential, and cumulative in ideas, concepts, and principles.

c. Reorganize the courses offered to meet requirements regarding U.S. history, the Constitution, and state and local government so that they become an interdisciplinary study of American people and their institutions.

d. Combine 1 - 3 above in order to allow students to focus on both the Western World and the non-Western World in depth via a study of a "modern" nation and an "emerging" nation in each by means of an interdisciplinary approach.

e. Provide for one-fourth to one-third of the units of each major in the social sciences to be elective across the social science disciplines as well as concentrated in a single other discipline.

Advantages

a. The recommended changes will not require lengthening student programs.
b. There need be no proliferation of courses.
c. No additional staff will be required.
d. Each alternative will better meet the needs of social studies teachers of the '70's.
e. The greater relevance will appeal to present day students.

Disadvantages

a. The new course structure may require some faculty members to revise their approaches to teaching.
b. Faculty who are narrowly oriented to their own disciplines may be resistant to change.
c. Revisions in course outlines and catalogs will be necessary.

4. The Setting. Curricula for particular courses are generally developed within a department. These may be submitted to a college curriculum committee for approval. Other than this, the separate departments do not ordinarily exert effort to learn what others are teaching or to relate their offerings to the material taught in other departments. Seldom are individuals from outside the department involved in curriculum construction.

The Problem in Teacher Preparation. Much of what occurs in an educational methods course is dependent upon what has previously transpired in subject matter courses. For example, the knowledge of the social sciences that students bring with them will effect the manner in which the social studies methods teacher operates. All too often the methods teacher lacks any organized knowledge of the subject matter courses which his students have taken.

It would also be well if the subject matter specialist knew more of what was expected of his students when they entered the teaching methods course in his field. It is not expected that he will tailor his course just for pre-service teachers. However, in many instances as many as one-half of his students will be education majors. It would seem appropriate that he be informed about the methods course in teaching his specialty. More than that, the subject matter specialist could probably contribute measurably to the development of a curriculum for that course.

A Proposed Solution. Professors from the social sciences and education professors concerned with the social studies methods course would serve on a committee charged with developing a curriculum for the methods course and a curriculum for the freshman level courses in the social sciences. Another committee composed of a similar combination of people might be concerned with the development of major and minor programs for undergraduate students.

Final authority would rest with the disciplines in the development of the freshman level courses. Education personnel would have final authority in the development of the methods course curriculum. (perhaps this should be reversed - it would make them listen to one another a little more closely). In such a situation the professional educators might profit from learning more about what the discipline professors feel is of most importance in their fields and how they think it should be taught. The professional educators could assist in the development of the basic undergraduate courses with their knowledge of methodology. In addition, they would present the viewpoint of a generalist rather than a specialist. This is sometimes needed, for many of the students in these classes are non-majors. Essential to all of this is administrative support through reduced teaching loads for the people involved.

Advantages.

a. Communication and cooperation between education and subject matter areas should be increased considerably.
b. New information and insights would be brought to curriculum development.

Disadvantages.

a. Some faculty may not wish to participate.
b. This requires groups of professors to work closely in situations which involve compromise and conciliation. Some faculty members may lack this ability.
c. Cost will increase as teaching loads are reduced and more faculty are needed.

5. The Setting. During their college career students study with many professors in several different departments. The primary responsibility for combining the results of these varied experiences into a workable synthesis rests upon the students. Separate departments do not ordinarily exert great effort to learn what others are teaching or to relate their offerings to the material taught in other areas.

The Problem in Teacher Preparation. Professors of educational methods often lack full knowledge of the subject matter background of their students. In addition, the students often lack the ability to translate their knowledge of subject matter into activities for youngsters.

Proposed Solutions.

a. Professors of educational methods and professors of related academic disciplines could exchange course syllabi. For example, a professor of social studies methods would exchange syllabi with the professors of social science courses which are prerequisites of the methods course.

Advantages.

a. Professors of education and the social science professors would have opportunity to learn what the other is trying to accomplish.
b. Methods teachers would have a better knowledge of the base upon which they have to build.
c. This is relatively easy. It requires little or no extra time or effort for the people involved.

Disadvantages.

a. A syllabus on paper may be far different from the course as actually taught.
b. It is too easy to file an outline and never look at it again.
c. There is no follow up.
d. There is little or no face to face communication.
e. Some faculty members may be defensive and prefer not to participate.

Proposed Solutions.

b. In addition to the exchange of syllabi, there might be an exchange of classroom visits between professors of education and the disciplines. As with the exchange of syllabi, this would not be indiscriminate visiting. The visits would take place between professors with classes which are related.

Advantages.

a. Advantages one and two of Proposed Solutions (a.) would prevail and be enhanced by classroom visits.
b. Face to face communication would exist.

Disadvantages.

a. Professors would be hard pressed to teach a full load and then visit other classes.
b. This solution may create more defensive behavior on the part of the professors than the exchange of syllabi.
c. A limited number of visits may give a biased view of what is actually happening.

Proposed Solutions.

c. Qualified professors could be appointed to both an academic department and an educational department. For example, a person might teach a freshman social science course and the social studies methods course. This appointment would probably work best if the academic portion of the teaching load included freshman or sophomore level courses rather than more specialized junior and senior courses.

Advantages.

a. A continuing communication link is formed between a discipline and the education course which deals with the teaching of that discipline.
b. Education majors would learn their methods from a person with a strong subject matter background.

Disadvantages.

a. It may be difficult to find people interested and/or trained to act in the dual capacity.
b. The individual so appointed may find himself isolated from both departments.

6. The Setting. Students generally leave the confines of the college campus for their student teaching or intern experience. They may be within a few blocks of the campus, or they may be hundreds of miles away.

The Problem in Teacher Preparation. Isolated from the college student teachers face the reality of an actual teaching situation. They obtain assistance from their classroom supervisor and a college supervisor. Often, however, they would like assistance from specialists in subject matter areas in which their supervisors are not well trained.

A Proposed Solution. One day each quarter or semester the student teachers would return to campus. A schedule would be arranged so representatives from various departments would be available to meet with these student teachers during at least one period in the day. It would be best to schedule these periods throughout the day so student teachers would have the opportunity to visit with several different departments if necessary. In these meetings the students could seek help in meeting the specialized problems he has encountered in his teaching.

It might be best if the student teachers sent in their questions and problems in advance. This would give professors an opportunity to prepare suggestions and locate materials.

A similar session could be held with first year teachers in late October or November.

Advantages.

a. Student teachers needing help in specialized areas such as anthropology, economics, political science, and sociology would have opportunity to meet with specialists from these fields.
b. College teachers would learn first hand of the problems faced by their students when they have to translate what they have learned in college to a public or private school setting.
c. The confrontation with reality could lead to improved college courses, designed to better meet these problems.
d. Better relations with public and private schools may develop as student teachers better face and overcome their problems.

Disadvantages.

a. Some schools don't want to release the student teacher.
b. One day or one period may not be long enough. To obtain more time than this would be difficult.
c. College professors may not care to participate.
d. College professors may have a difficulty finding time to participate because of conflicts with their regular teaching loads.

7. The Setting. Student teachers and interns generally receive some supervision from their colleges. In most cases the supervisor is from the school of education. He may be a full time supervisor or a teacher of education courses in addition to his supervisory duties. Frequently these supervisors observe student teachers at a number of grade levels and teaching a wide variety of subjects.

The Problem in Teacher Preparation. Under the above conditions, the college supervisor often is unprepared to provide assistance for student teachers faced with problems related to the teaching of particular social science disciplines.

A Proposed Solution. A professor from a discipline might accompany the regular student teaching supervisor upon the request of either, or the request of the student teacher. This professor would act in an advisory capacity. Should a difference of opinion arise concerning the manner in which to handle a situation, the student teacher cannot be put in the impossible situation of being responsible to two, or perhaps three supervisors, each with a different solution for his problem.

Advantages.

a. The student teacher would have opportunity to receive subject matter background and insight when and where he needs it most.
b. The subject matter specialist would have first hand opportunities to learn of the problems of teaching his specialty in elementary and secondary schools.

c. There would be considerable face to face communication between professional educators and the subject matter specialists.

Disadvantages.

a. It may be difficult to find subject matter specialists interested in visiting classrooms.
b. Reduced teaching loads may be necessary to provide time for the classroom visits by the professors from the disciplines.
c. The more prople involved in supervision of a student teacher the greater is the chance for differences of opinion and controversy.

8. The Setting. Each summer large numbers of teachers return to college campuses to enroll in workshops that supposedly will help them implement ideas or new approaches. In addition, many such workshops are offered in local school district settings or are co-sponsored jointly by participating districts.

The Problem: Too often change in teacher behavior does not follow time given to workshops.

a. Teachers complain that it is difficult to apply workshop ideas and materials in their particular setting or classroom.

b. Teachers find it difficult to go beyond that which was demonstrated in the workshop setting.

c. Some teachers feel a need for additional support and more specific ideas as they implement a new idea or approach.

A Proposed Solution. Provide a course (2-4 units) that will follow the workshop and that will be given over a period of time during the school year. The same instructor(s) would be involved. The main purpose of the class would be to help teachers fully implement ideas and materials developed in the prededing workshop. For example, a late summer, one week workshop given in "Developing Inductive Approaches for Teaching the Social Studies" could be followed by a course of the same or similar title. This class could be given every other Saturday during September, October, and November. It is during the class time that additional focus on the approaches could be given and teachers could receive specific help regarding expressed problems. Evaluation of the teachers could occur later when the instructor observes each teacher in action in her classroom.

Advantages

a. As indicated, the instructor would have more time to give additional focus, broaden understandings, and develop new insights.

b. The teachers would have more time to express concerns and problems.

c. More time could be given to helping teachers plan and develpp solutions to specific problems.

d. Time could be given to a teacher exchange of ideas and materials.

e. Direct support can be given to ideas expressed by teachers.

Disadvantages

a. Following a workshop given on a college campus, the teachers return to positions over a large area (often several states). This makes it extremely difficult for a class to be given.

b. Often times the workshop instructor is from another area or state and it is physically impossible for him to follow up with a class.

Indirect

1. The Setting. Each year colleges across the land send thousands of students into the public and private schools, first for a student teaching or intern experience and then as first year teachers.

The Problem in Teacher Preparation. Public and private school personnel are first hand observers of beginning student teachers and first year teachers. They are probably in the best position to evaluate the competency of these beginning teachers to face and overcome the real problems of teaching. However, communication between this group and teacher education institutions is often at best only informal and fragmented. Professors involved in the education of teachers seldom hear first hand reports of the performance of their students.

A Proposed Solution. Representatives from the public and private schools, professional education, and the various disciplines should meet to discuss the competencies required of student teachers and beginning teachers. They should also discuss the competency of present graduates of the teacher education institution. This meeting could be conducted in an afternoon and an evening. It would be better perhaps to conduct it during the day if participants can be freed from their regular duties. A week workshop in the summer might be another possibility.

Advantages.

a. Communications between all parties should be improved.
b. Discussions of this nature would provide the professors of academic disciplines with direct feedback concerning the strengths and weaknesses of their students when faced with the practical problems of teaching.
c. The same feedback would be available for professors of education.
d. Any changes undertaken by the college could be guided by this feedback.
e. Public school personnel would gain a better understanding of the problems and the goals of the college.

Disadvantages.

a. It may be difficult to obtain released time for these meetings, especially for the school teachers.
b. It is possible for these meetings to develop into a fight in which each group blames the others for the problems which exist.
c. Some departments are unconcerned with teacher preparation and may not send a representative to a meeting of this nature.

2. The Setting. All too often there is little concerted effort on the part of individuals or the institution to improve teaching at the college level. Individual professors are likely to exert great effort to gain increased knowledge and skill in a field of special interest, but little or no effort to improve their ability to help students learn about this field. College professors range from very strong to very weak in teaching ability. Since so little effort is spent upon improving teaching ability, and because the material

rewards for doing so are few, low quality instruction is perpetuated. Even those people who are by nature rather good teachers could probably improve, but under present conditions they are not encouraged to do so.

The Problem in Teacher Preparation. Because of the lack of attention given to improving teaching in colleges, the pre-service teacher is exposed to considerable poor teaching during his college career. This may produce at least two damaging effects. First, the pre-service teacher simply does not become well informed about the social sciences. Second, because beginning teachers tend to teach as they were taught, the pre-service teacher often begins student teaching lacking effective skills in teaching and possessing habits and techniques which hinder learning.

A Proposed Solution. A college wide effort should be made to upgrade teaching. Representatives from all areas of the college or university (social sciences, sciences, English, etc.,) could form a committee for the improvement of instruction. Their charge would be to provide college instructors with useful information for planning better teaching. This committee might give special attention to (1) keeping the faculty informed about the rapid developments in technology as it applies to instruction, and (2) new developments in the psychology of learning as they apply to teaching college students. This approach would not directly change or improve teacher education. However, with improved college teaching we might anticipate better educated college graduates. And since teachers tend to teach as they were taught, improved instruction in college courses might lead to better teaching in elementary and secondary schools.

Advantages.

a. The entire college or university is involved.
b. Communication is increased between the departments.
c. Improved instruction for all students is possible.
d. There is likely to be improved instruction for students preparing to teach, resulting in student teachers and first year teachers better prepared to handle their new responsibilities.

Disadvantages.

a. This approach is concerned with the improvement of college instruction. It applies only indirectly to improving teacher education.
b. One representative from each department makes for a very large committee.
c. If every department is not represented it is unlikely that all instructors will be reached.
d. The responsibility and authority of the committee must be well defined or conflicts may result.
e. This could involve a considerable amount of time. For example, a continuing seminar might be developed. Many professors may not wish to give this much time.

3. The Setting. Almost all undergraduates are required to take a number of courses in various disciplines during their freshman and sophomore years in colleges. This program is commonly called general education. Much of what an elementary major learns about an academic discipline is learned in these first two years. A secondary major usually will learn no more about any of these disciplines while in college except for the ones in which he specializes.

The Problem in Teacher Preparation. Colleges are often criticized because education majors lack subject matter competence. This creates problems for the individual teacher trying to teach his class without an adequate background of information. It also creates a problem in public relations for the college.

A Proposed Solution. Too often undergraduate courses such as geography 100 are taught by the newest member of the department or by a teaching assistant. In either case this person is likely to be less than fully dedicated and/or qualified. The same person seldom teaches the course long enough to develop it fully.

The best professors in the various departments should teach these undergraduate courses. Associate and full professors who have displayed teaching ability and scholarship in their fields of study could be assigned to teach at least one general education course per quarter or semester.

Advantages.

a. Better instruction for all undergraduates.
b. A better base upon which to build teaching minors and majors for secondary teachers.
c. A better subject matter background for elementary teachers.
d. A better public image of the college or university.

Disadvantages.

a. Colleges and Universities reward professors for research and publication. These activities do not grow easily out of teaching freshman classes.
b. Many full professors don't want to teach the general education courses.
c. A shortage of fully qualified people makes it difficult to staff both general education and upper level courses with fully qualified instructors.